

Message Text

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ACTION AID-59

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 DHA-02 ORM-02

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PRS-01 USIA-06 FDRE-00 IGA-02 /135 W

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R 261110Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5004

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION GENEVA

USMISSION USUN NY

SECDEF

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E.O. 11652: N/A

SUBJECT: ICRC APPEAL FOR REFUGEES IN WESTERN (SPANISH) SAHARA

REF: A. NOUAKCHOTT 0157 B. STATE 014263

1. SUMMARY: IN SEPARATE CONVERSATIONS 23 JANUARY WITH FFPO AND LUTHERAN WORLD FEDERATION REP, MAURITANIAN RED CRESCENT PRESIDENT SAID THAT THERE NO REFUGEES MAURITANIAN PORTION FORMER SPANISH SAHARA, THAT ASSISTANCE PRESENTLY BEING GIVEN TO THESE NEW MAURITANIAN CITIZENS LIVING IN FORMER SAHARA AS RESULT OF DEPENDENCE ON ASSISTANCE CREATED BY SPANISH, THAT SHE GOING TO AREA 26 JANUARY TO NCVESTIGATE NEEDS, AND THAT ON RETURN SHE WOULD ADVISE EXTENT OF ASSISTANCE REQUIRED. END SUMMARY.

2. FFPO EXPLAINED HAD RECEIVED CABLE INDICATING THAT ICRC THOUGHT THERE MIGHT BE ASSISTANCE REQUIRED FOR POPULATION OF FORMER SAHARA, THAT HE KNEW FROM TALKING WITH GIRM OFFICIALS THAT ASSISTANCE ALREADY BEING PROVIDED TO POPULATION OF AREA UNDER MAURITANIAN ADMINISTRATION,

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AND THAT CHIEF OF GIRM CEREALS OFFICE HAD ALREADY EXPLAINED TO HIM

THAT THESE PERSONS WERE CONSIDERED MAURITANIAN CITIZENS LIKE ANY OTHERS AND ENTITLED TO SAME ASSISTANCE. RED CRESCENT PRESIDENT SAID THIS WAS INDEED CASE AND LAUNCHED INTO LENGTHY EXPLANATION OF FACT THERE WERE NO REFUGEES, JUST MAURITANIANS WHO HAD EARLIER BEEN SEPARATED BY A COLONIAL BOUNDARY, THAT REPORTS OF MASSIVE REFUGEE MOVEMENTS ACROSS NORTHERN FRONTIER ARE FALSE RUMOURS SPREAD BY AN UNFRIENDLY COUNTRY, AND THAT MUCH OF PRESENT SITUATION CAUSED BY ACTIONS OF SPANISH ADMINISTRATION WHICH HAD WILLFULLY ACCUSTOMED POPULATION TO RECEIVING EVERYTHING FROM GOVERNMENT WITHOUT WORKING FOR IT. SHE CONTINUED THAT GIRM WAS INDEED ALREADY PROVIDING ASSISTANCE, IN WHICH RED CRESCENT WAS ASSISTING WITH ITS LIMITED STOCKS OF FOOD, BLANKETS, ETC. PRESENT SITUATION WAS SIMPLY TRANSITIONAL PERIOD AS MAURITANIAN ADMINISTRATION WAS FULLY ESTABLISHED IN AREA.

3. SHE CONTINUED THAT SHE HAD RECEIVED VISIT OF ICRC REP 20 JANUARY. HAD TOLD HIM THAT INSUFFICIENT INFORMATION WAS AVAILABLE TO ASSESS POSSIBLE NEEDS THIS AREA. HAD PROPOSED THAT SHE AND HE MAKE ASSESSMENT VISIT TO AREA, BUT HE HAD NOT HAD TIME TO DO SO. SHE SAID THAT SHE EXPECTED TO MAKE SUCH A VISIT DURING WEEK OF 26 JANUARY. ON RETURN, SHE WOULD ADVISE DONOR REPRESENTATIVES OF PRECISE

SITUATION AND WHAT ASSISTANCE REQUIRED, IF ANY. FFPO SAID THAT THUS IN EFFECT NO ASSISTANCE PRESENTLY BEING REQUESTED AND THAT ANY REQUEST WOULD DEPEND ON HER FINDINGS. PRESIDENT SAID THIS ESSENTIALLY CORRECT BUT THAT SHE HAD INDICATED TO ICRC REP THAT SOME FORM OF ASSISTANCE WOULD BE NECESSARY. THUS ICRC MIGHT CONTACT DONORS. NATURE AND EXTENT OF ASSISTANCY, HOWEVER, COULD ONLY BE DEFINED ON HER RETURN.

4. LUTHERAN REP TOLD FFPO HE GIVEN ESSENTIALLY SAME INFORMATION IN HIS CONVERSATION. COMMENTED ON EXTREME SENSITIVITY OF PRESIDENT'S REACTION TO TERM "REFUGEES" AND SAID THIS OBVIOUSLY VERY SENSITIVE SITUATION. HE INTENDED TAKE NO ACTION WITH HIS HEADQUARTERS UNTIL AFTER PRESIDENT'S RETURN FROM TRIP. DECON AFTER 24 JANUARY 1978.HANDYSIDE

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